Yuchi language

Yuchi (Euchee) is the language of the Tsoyaha (Children of the Sun), also known as Yuchi people, living in Oklahoma. Historically, they lived in the southeastern United States, including eastern Tennessee, western Carolinas, northern Georgia, and Alabama, during the period of early European colonization. Many speakers of the Yuchi language were forcibly relocated to Indian Territory in the early 19th century. Some audio tapes exist in the collections of the Columbus State University Archives in Columbus, Georgia.[3]

Yuchi	
Euchee	
Tsoyaha	
Native to	United States
Region	East central Oklahoma
Ethnicity	1,500 Yuchi (2007)[1]
Native speakers	4 (2016)[1] 12 L2 speakers (2016)[1]
Language family	Language isolate or Macro-Siouan
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	yuc
Glottolog	yuch1247 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yuch1247)[2]

Location of Yuchi at the time of European contact

Contents

Classification

Yuchi is classified as a language isolate, because it is not known to be related to any other language. Various linguists have made claims, however, that the language has a distant relationship with the Siouan family: Sapir in 1921 and 1929, Haas in 1951 and 1964, Elmendorf in 1964, Rudus in 1974, and Crawford in 1979.[4]

In 1997, the Euchees United Cultural Historical Educational Efforts (EUCHEE) claimed that there were currently two spoken dialects: the Duck Creek/Polecat and the Bigpond variations.[5]

Geographic distribution

Yuchi is primarily spoken in the northeastern Oklahoma, where Yuchi people live in Tulsa, Okmulgee, and Creek counties, within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's tribal jurisdictional area.[6] In 1997, 12 to 19 elders spoke the language out of an estimated Yuchi population of 1,500 speakers. In 2009, only five fluent speakers whose first language was not English remained.
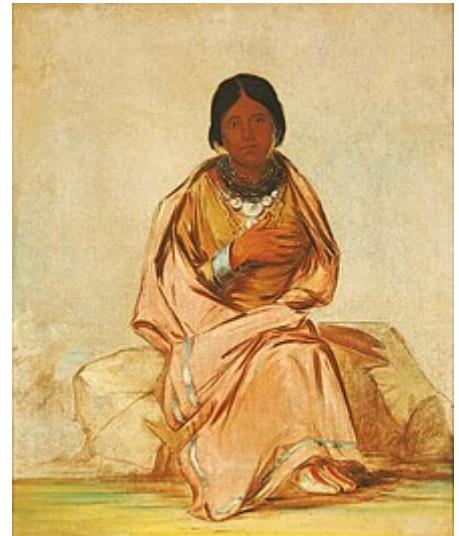
Cheeaexeco, a Yuchi woman, painted by George Catlin, 1838

History

Yuchi people lived in Tennessee at the time of European and African contact. In the early 18th century, they moved to northwestern Georgia in the southeastern United States. In the 1830s, speakers of the Yuchi language were forcibly relocated with the Muscogee people to Indian Territory prior to the Trail of Tears.

Contradiction in linguistic study and linguistic history

The spoken Yuchi language has changed over time, in part due to relocation. In 1885 in an article in *Science*, Swiss linguist Albert S. Gatschet wrote about various linguistic idiosyncrasies in Yuchi. He claimed that adjectives are not expressed with number, but nouns are with the addition of the particle *ha* (coming from the original term *wahále*, meaning *many*) which made the word essentially plural. He also claimed that the language was no longer in an archaic state due to the lack of a "dual," and that the language had temporal and personal inflection.[7] Gatschet also did much field study and documentation regarding the language, many of his original vocabulary lists can be found at the National Anthropological Archives or on their website.

In 1907, Frank G. Speck published *Ethnology of Yuchi Indians*, which claimed that Yuchi only had one dialect, that inflection was not a characteristic, and that there were no true plurals. This information contradicts the study made by Albert S. Gatschet in the century beforehand. The two authors agreed on linguistic idiosyncrasy, the case of the third person.[8]

In 1997, the Euchees United Cultural Historical Educational Efforts (E.U.C.H.E.E.) published a work entitled *Euchees: Past and Present,* which provided more recent information regarding the language. The organization states two dialects exist today, from the Duckcreek/Polecat and Bigpond areas. This contradicts Speck's 1907 claim of only one dialect.[5]

Current status

Due to assimilation into Muscogee and English-speaking culture, only a few elderly speakers of the Yuchi language remain.

In 2000 the estimated number of fluent Yuchi speakers was 15, but this number dwindled to 7 by 2006[9] 5 by 2010,[10] and 4 by 2013.[10] In 2016, first-language speaker and Yuchi elder Josephine Wildcat Bigler died. She had been active in recording and preserving the Yuchi language for future generations.[11]

The Euchee Language Project teaches Yuchi classes in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, free of charge.[12]

Sisters Maxine Wildcat Barnett (left) and Josephine Wildcat Bigler (1921–2016); two Yuchi speakers, visiting their grandmother's grave in a cemetery behind Pickett Chapel in Sapulpa, Oklahoma. According to the sisters, their grandmother had insisted that Yuchi be their native language.

Presence in popular literature

The Yuchi people and language are the subject of a chapter in *Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages*, a book on endangered languages by Mark Abley.[13]

Linguistics

The language originally had no written standard until the 1970s, when James Crawford and Addie George created a phonetic transliteration which is now used by the Yuchi people to write the language.

Morphosyntax

Yuchi is an agglutinative language, in which words are pieced together out of pre-existing morphemes to make new words entirely. The word order of the language is subject–object–verb.[14]

The language uses clitics and particles to express a variety of things, including possessives, cases, affixes, ideas, locatives, instrumentals, simulatives, ablatives, and demonstratives.[15]

Phonology

The language has 49 sounds, 38 of which are consonants, and the remaining 11 are vowels. This number is more than twice the number of most Southeastern Native American Languages.[16]

Vowels

Yuchi has oral and nasal vowels. Oral vowels are defined as being created by the raising of the soft palate to the nasopharyngeal wall, creating a velopharyngeal space within the oral cavity; nasal vowels, on the other hand, are typically defined as being created by the lowering of the soft palate, allowing air to escape through the nasal cavity.[17]

Two vowel charts appears below.[18] Note that the vowels below represent the *phonetic* inventory, meaning the set of all (or most) sounds in the language; the *phonemic* inventory, those sounds which contrastively mark differences in meaning, are highlighted in the list below the vowel charts.

	Front	**Central**	**Back**
Close	i		ʊ, u
Close-mid	e		o
Mid		ə	
Open-mid	ɛ		ʌ, ɔ
Open	æ, a		

	Front	**Central**	**Back**
Close	ĩ, ɪ̃		
Close-mid	ẽ		õ
Mid		ə̃	
Open-mid	ɛ̃		ɔ̃
Open	æ̃, ã		

The phonemic vowels of Yuchi are /i, u, e, o, æ, a, ĩ, ẽ, õ, æ̃, ã/; some levels of phonological or morphological variation must therefore be occurring in order for all of the sounds above to be possible.

Phonological variation

Phonological variation often occurs in different kinds of morphological environments. For example, the phoneme /o/ is often pronounced as /ʊ/ in 1st-person singular and impersonal 3rd-person pronouns by Big Pond speakers. Also, the phonemes /a/ and /o/ can become [ə] in unstressed environments.[19]

Length

Vowel length indicates grammatical function, such as superlative or comparative adjective forms or emphasis. It may also indicate contracted morphemes, and thus is not a phonological process but rather a morphological one.[20]

Consonants

Yuchi has been analyzed as having from 19 to 40 consonants, chiefly depending on whether the glottalized and labialized consonants are counted, or considered to be sequences with /ʔ/ and /w/, respectively. Some of the latter are included in the table in parentheses:

		Labial	Alveolar		Palatal	Velar	Glottal
			plain	sibilant			
Stop	tenuis	**p** [p]	**t** [t]	**ts** [ts]	**ch** [tʃ]	**k** [k]	**'** [ʔ]
	aspirated	**pʰ** [pʰ]	**tʰ** [tʰ]	**tsʰ** [tsʰ]	**chʰ** [tʃʰ]	**kʰ** [kʰ]	
	voiced	**b** [b]	**d** [d]	**dz** [dz]	**j** [dʒ]	**g** [g]	
	ejective	(**p'** [pʼ])	(**t'** [tʼ])	(**ts'** [tsʼ])	(**ch'** [tʃʼ])	(**k'** [kʼ])	
Fricative		**f** [f]	**ł** [ɬ]	**s** [s]	**sh** [ʃ]		**h** [h]
Approximant		**w** [w]	**l** [l]		**y** [j]		
Nasal		**m** [m]	**n** [n]				

Stress and intonation

Stress

Stress in Yuchi is fairly regular. All major parts of speech have syllable-final stress, and syllable-initial secondary stress; also, particles (one-syllable words) are stressed. There are some minimal pairs to be found due to stress; some representative samples include:

[ˈgopʼa] – "Creek person, tribe"[21] [goˈpʼa] – "go see someone"[21] [ˈsɛt ʼne] – he sees[22] [sɛt ˈʼne] – she sees[23] [ʃaˈja] – "weeds"[21] [ˈ ʃaja] – "squirrel"[21]

As mentioned above, most nouns have syllable-final primary stress; there are, however, some regularized exceptions to this rule, the most common of which are nouns with lexicalized suffixes in the stem, which have stress on the penultimate syllable. Also, contractions within compounded nouns have primary stress on the contraction. There are various other exceptions, but the two mentioned above are the most frequent and the most important in helping us to understand why Yuchi nouns often appear to have irregular stress patterns.[24]

Both regular and non-regular stress patterns are exemplified below, all glossed. All data come from Wagner, 1974, unless otherwise noted.

[gojalinɛʔ] – young man [jacɛsiʔ] – sparks of fire [tsɛʔ] – water [saʔ] – earth [tsoonɔʔ] – the sun [ʔa ˈgale] ~ [agæle] – today, morning[25] [tsɛ ˈkʰale] – misty rain[25] [kʼɔndi] – meat

Verb stems typically have primary stress on the ultimate syllable, as well. The two major exceptions are reduplicated verbs, which have equal stress on both the last and reduplicated syllables of the stem, and verb compounds with the head root /ju/, in which primary stress is syllable-initial. Some examples include:

[getaʔ] – to hold it up[26] [taʔtaʔ] – light[23]

Intonation

Intonation varies depending upon the kinds of sentences being uttered. Declarative, negative, and command speech acts have falling intonation, while information questions and yes/no questions have rising pitch.[27] Morphologically, intonation can also change the reception of a word and its intended meaning, as we see in the following example of three different intonation patterns for the word "What":[28]

[wikæ] – "What?" (requesting information) [wíkæ ↘] – "What?" (didn't hear) [wikæ ↘] – "What?" (frightened/surprised)

Contractions

One of the most significant aspects of Yuchi morphophonology is the prevalence of contractions. Contraction should not here be taken to mean only a shortening of words; rather, it is more useful to think of contraction as a deletion of sounds that in turn affects surrounding vowels.[29]

What can be contracted is dependent upon two major factors, the sound which begins the contracted syllable, and the stress of the syllable. In order for a syllable to be contracted, it must begin with a [+sonorant] consonant, that is, a voiced sound with a relatively free passage of air. In Yuchi, this includes sounds such as /n/, /ˀn/, /w/, /ˀw/, /j/, /ˀj/ (where /ˀ/ indicates a glottallized sound), the fricative /ˀh/, and /ʔ/. A syllable must also be unstressed in order to contract.[30]

Contraction causes phonetic changes in the vowels directly preceding the deleted syllable. In order for Yuchi speakers to understand the grammatical features of the words being used in contracted forms, vowel features alternate to match the deleted sounds.[30] So, for example, if the morpheme /ne/ was contracted, the vowel preceding it would become nasalized to indicate that a nasal sound has been lost.

Contraction must necessarily come before the phonetic change in vowels. For example, consider the following word:[31]

[di ˀlɛ nɛp ʔá jɛ] – 'Did you look in the box?'

/nɛ/ can contract here because it is an unstressed syllable beginning with a sonorant: [di ˀlɛ mp ʔá jɛ]. CCC clusters are relatively rare, occurring in only six variations as noted by Wolff,[32] four of them beginning with fricatives; such a construction as above would therefore likely be odd to speakers of Yuchi.

Contractions take on several forms and occur in many other environments. Those seeking additional information about the many kinds of contraction in Yuchi are advised to seek out Dr. Mary Linn's "A Grammar of Euchee."

A list of the most commonly contracted morphemes is below, along with their grammatical function.[33]

ne- : 2nd-person singular actor

we-: 3rd-person non-Yuchi actor or patient, singular or plural

'o-: 3rd-person plural Yuchi actor or patient (women's speech)

hi-: 3rd-person inanimate patient, singular or plural

ho-: 3rd-person inanimate patient and participant, singular or plural

'yu-: verb root

-ne-: habitual aspect

-e: active verbalizer

Grammar

Like many indigenous American languages, Yuchi grammar is agglutinative.[34] Words are formed by the addition of various prefixes and suffixes to a mono- or polysyllabic stem. Yuchi features separate male and female registers[35] and an idiosyncratic noun classification system wherein nominal distinction is made regarding animacy, Yuchi ethnicity, kinship and, for inanimate nouns, shape or spatial position.[36]

Much of the information in this section is drawn from Wagner (1938); some of Wagner's conclusions, particularly regarding his interpretation of Yuchi kinship terminology[37] and certain aspects of his description of Yuchi pronouns,[38] have been disputed.

Verbs

The Yuchi verb consists of a mono- or polysyllabic stem modified almost exclusively by suffixing.[39] Yuchi features attributive verbs, which is to say that the language makes very little distinction between verbs and adjectives as parts of speech. For this reason, Yuchi verbs and adjectives are virtually identical.[40]

Tense

The concept of temporal verb inflection is only weakly realized in Yuchi[41] and corresponds more closely in some cases to aspect rather than tense. The past tense is generally expressed via suffixing of the verb stem.[42]

- -djin   incomplete past ("ate")
- -dji'nfwa   complete past ("had eaten")
- -djinfa'   habitual past ("used to eat")
- -djinfwadji'n   emphatic past ("happened to eat")
- -djigo'   uncertain past ("perhaps ate")

There are also two ways of expressing future tense. The first, which usually denotes intentions or events of the immediate future, is expressed by lengthening, stressing and nasalizing the final syllable of the verb stem. The second, pertaining to the distant future, is expressed by the suffix -e'le.[43]

Modality

Modality of the verb is also expressed through suffixing.[44]

- -no   imperative ("go!")
- -wo   exhortative ("should go")
- -go   potential ("might go")
- -ho   emphatic ("did go")
- -te   ability ("can go")

Nouns

Nouns are classified according to a broad animate versus inanimate paradigm[45] which is expressed using a variety of article suffixes. Within the animate class, nouns are further subdivided into two sub-classes. The first of these includes all humans belonging to the Yuchi tribe, and is itself further divided according to a very complex system of kinship relations and gendered speech registers.[35] The second sub-class of animate

nouns encompasses all human beings outside of the Yuchi tribe, as well as animals, and the sun and moon.[46] The animate (Yuchi) suffixes express a very complex system of kinship and gendered speech[47] in much the same way as do third person pronouns.

- -no   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- -sen'o   any younger (for men, related) female (used by men and women)
- -s'en'o   younger male relative (used by women only)
- -eno   older female relative (used by men and women)
- -ono   younger unrelated male or any other unrelated person (used by women only)
- -ino   older male relative (used by women only)
- -weno'   all other animate beings

Inanimate nouns are divided into three groups: objects that are *vertical*, objects that are *horizontal* and objects that are *round* or otherwise do not conform to either of the other two groups.[46] Each of these groups is represented by a suffix.

- -fa   vertical
- -'e   horizontal
- -dji   round

Number

The concept of plurality in Yuchi is not as strongly developed as in English,[48] leading one early descriptivist to claim that Yuchi has "no true plural."[49] Animate nouns can, however, be pluralized by the addition of suffixes that correspond closely to their singular counterparts. Although tribal affiliation and gender distinctions carry over into the plural, kinship does not.[50]

- -he'no   Yuchi tribe members (male speech)
- -o'no   Yuchi tribe members (female speech)
- -we'no   all other animate beings

Inanimate nouns can be made plural by the suffix *-ha*, which replaces the singular inanimate suffixes listed above.[51]

In addition to suffixing, several words related to kinship are pluralized via reduplication of the stem.[51]

Pronouns

The Yuchi pronoun is extremely complex.[52] Except in a few emphatic forms,[53] the pronoun is always suffixed to a verb or noun stem, and appears in eight distinct sets.[54]

The first pronoun set, termed the *Subjective Series*,[55] denotes the subject relationship of the pronoun to the verb.[56] Series 1 and 2 are close variations that respectively represent a general and specific object, whereas the "independent series" represents freestanding pronouns.[55]

	Subject Series 1	Subject Series 2	Independent
1st Person Sing.	di-	do-	di
2nd Person Sing.	ne-	yo-	tse

Third person pronouns follow a complex pattern of kinship and gendered speech that corresponds very closely to the animate noun suffixes.

- ho- / ho- / hodi   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- se- / sio- / sedi   any younger (for men, related) female (used by men and women)
- s'e- / s'io- / s'edi   younger male relative (used by women only)
- e- / eyo- / edi   older female relative (used by men and women)
- o- / o- / odi   younger unrelated male or any other unrelated person (used by women only)
- i-   any older male relative (used by women only)
- we- / yo- / wedi'   all animate, non-Yuchi beings

First person pronouns in the plural are <u>inclusive and exclusive</u>, and there are several kinship-specific third person forms.

	Subject Series 1	Subject Series 2	Independent
1st Person Pl.	o- / no-	o- / no-	odi' / nodi'
2nd Person Pl.	a-	a'yo-	a'dze

A few of the third person singular pronouns double as plural pronouns as well.

- ho- / ho- / hodi   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- o- / o- / odi   in the plural, refers to any younger Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)
- i-   in the plural, refers to any older Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)
- we- / yo- / wedi'   all animate, non-Yuchi beings

The next set, termed the *Objective Series*,[57] denotes the direct or indirect object relationship of the pronoun to the verb.[58] It otherwise functions identically to the Subjective Series; the two pronoun sets are distinguished by their relative positions within the verb complex.[57]

	Direct Series 1	Direct Series 2	Indirect
1st Person Sing.	di-	do-	di
2nd Person Sing.	ne-	yo-	tse

The third person singular pronouns are identical to those of the Subjective Series.

- ho- / ho- / hodi   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- se- / sio- / sedi   any younger (for men, related) female (used by men and women)
- s'e- / s'io- / s'edi   younger male relative (used by women only)
- e- / eyo- / edi   older female relative (used by men and women)
- o- / o- / odi   younger unrelated male or any other unrelated person (used by women only)
- i-   any older male relative (used by women only)
- we- / yo- / wedi'   all animate, non-Yuchi beings

	Direct Series 1	Direct Series 2	Indirect
1st Person Pl.	ondze- / ondzio-	ondzio- / nondzio-	ontso / nonsto
2nd Person Pl.	andze-	andzio-	aso

As above, the third person plural pronouns are identical to those of the Subjective Series.

- ho- / ho- / hodi   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- o- / o- / odi   in the plural, refers to any younger Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)
- i-   in the plural, refers to any older Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)
- we- / yo- / wedi'   all animate, non-Yuchi beings

Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are amalgamations of the Objective Series 1 and Subjective Series 1 ("Reflexive Series 1") or Subjective Series 2 ("Reflexive Series 2") pronouns.[59]

	Reflexive Series 1	Reflexive Series 2
1st Person Sing.	tse di-	do'-
2nd Person Sing.	nendze ne'-	yo'-

Reflexive third person pronouns function the same, in terms of kinship and gendered speech, as their non-reflexive counterparts.

- hode'- / hondio'-   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- siode'- / siodio'-   any younger (for men, related) female (used by men and women)
- s'iode'- / s'iodio'-   younger male relative (used by women only)
- e'yode- / eyondio'-   older female relative (used by men and women)
- ode'- / odio'-   younger unrelated male or any other unrelated person (used by women only)
- yode'- / yondio'-   any older male relative (used by women only)

Plural reflexive pronouns demonstrate clusivity in the first person, and are identical to non-reflexives in terms of kinship and gendered speech.

	Reflexive Series 1	Reflexive Series 2
1st Person Pl.	ondzeo'- / nondzeno'-	ondzeo'- / nondzeno'-
2nd Person Pl.	andzea'-	andzea'yo-

Plural reflexive pronouns function identically to their non-reflexive counterparts in the third person.

- hode'- / hondio'-   any male or female Yuchi (used by men and women)
- ode'- / odio'-   in the plural, refers to any younger Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)
- yode'- / yondio'-   in the plural, refers to any older Yuchi regardless of kinship or gender (used by women only)

Other affixes

Instrumental prefixes

The relationship between an action and the instrument by which it is carried out is expressed via the prefix *hi-*. This prefix has become fused in some cases with certain verb stems, forming a sort of instrumental verbal compound of idiomatic meaning.[60]

Locative affixes

The concept of location is important to the Yuchi verb complex. Similar in some ways to the English preposition, these prefixes denote the location or direction of the verb's action.[60]

- a-   static location
- ti-   inside of an object
- f'o-   inside the earth or under water
- toya-   into water
- ta-   on top of
- po-   under
- kya-   through
- la-   out of
- pe-   above or over
- yu-   up in the air
- ya-   across

Additionally, there are four very general locative suffixes that can be used in place of the prefixes listed above.[54]

- -he   on / at / away from
- -le   along / back to
- -ke   over there
- -fa   to / towards

Negation

An entire verbal complex can be negated using one of two prefixes, *na-* or *ha-*, both of which are identical in meaning[61]

Interrogatives

In direct speech wherein the sentence does not begin with an interrogative pronoun, interrogatives are formed with the suffix *-le*. If the question implies some action in the future, the suffix *-yi* is used instead.[62]

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58. Ballard 1978, p. 104.
59. Wagner 1938, p. 333.
60. Wagner 1938, p. 358.
61. Wagner 1938, p. 361.
62. Wagner 1938, p. 357.

External links

- The Euchee Language Project (http://www.eucheelp.org/)
- Yuchi Language Primer (http://www.yuchi.org/YuchiLang/index.html)
- Albert S. Gatschet's original list of Yuchi vocabulary (1878–1891) (http://siris-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=1260O5V9197I4.32512&profile=all&source=~!siarchives&view=subscri

ptionsummary&uri=full=3100001~!16159~!1&ri=1&aspect=power&menu=search&ipp=20&spp =20&staffonly=&term=yuchi&index=.GW&uindex=&aspect=power&menu=search&ri=1)

- Albert S. Gatschet's original list of Yuchi vocabulary (1832–1907) (http://siris-archives.si.edu/ip ac20/ipac.jsp?session=1260O5V9197I4.32512&profile=all&source=~!siarchives&view=subscri ptionsummary&uri=full=3100001~!15908~!7&ri=1&aspect=power&menu=search&ipp=20&spp =20&staffonly=&term=yuchi&index=.GW&uindex=&aspect=power&menu=search&ri=1)
- Gunther Wagner (1931). *Yuchi Tales* (https://archive.org/details/rosettaproject_yuc_vertxt-2). Internet Archive. Retrieved 2012-07-07.
- Gunther Wagner (1938). "Yuchi grammar" (https://archive.org/stream/rosettaproject_tqw_mors yn-2#page/n307/mode/2up/search/yuchi). *Handbook of American Indian Languages*. pp. 300– 374. Retrieved 2012-07-07.
- Joseph Mahan Collection (https://archives.columbusstate.edu/findingaids/mc32.php), at Columbus State University Archives. Collection includes audio/visual recordings of Yuchi language (not yet available online)
- "Yuchi Language Project Attends Youth Language Fair" (http://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/y uchi-language-project-attends-youth-language-fair). *Cultural Survival*. 2012-04-26. Retrieved 2012-08-08.
- OLAC resources in and about the Yuchi language (http://www.language-archives.org/languag e/yuc)
- gOnE Enû O'wAdAnA: A New Generation of Yuchi Speakers (https://www.culturalsurvival.org/ publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/gone-enu-owadana-new-generation-yuchi-speakers), Cultural Survival